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# AmeriCorps\*VISTA



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**AmeriCorps\*VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) provides full-time members to nonprofit, faith-based and other community organizations, and public agencies to create and expand programs that bring low-income individuals and communities out of poverty.**

**AmeriCorps\*VISTA members leverage human, financial, and material resources to increase the capacity of thousands of low-income areas across the country to address challenges and improve their lives and communities.**



# History

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- ▶ **VISTA was a part of ACTION that was authorized in 1973.**
- ▶ **The Corporation for National and Community Service was formed in 1990 and has 3 major program areas**
  - Senior Corps programs (FGP, RSVP, SCP)**
  - AmeriCorps (direct, VISTA, NCCC)**
  - Learn and Serve America**



# Mission Statement

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**VISTA Members, who are 18 years or older, serve one year terms to allow organizations to build capacity and ultimately help reach the Corporation for National and Community Service mission to:**

***Improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering.***

**They leave behind lasting solutions to some of our country's toughest problems.**



# Strategic Initiatives

**For the five-year period of 2006-2010, the Corporation for National and Community Service has identified five strategic focus areas:**

- ◆ Mobilizing More Volunteers
- ◆ Ensuring a Brighter Future for All of America's Youth
- ◆ Engaging Students in Communities
- ◆ Harnessing Baby Boomers' Experience
- ◆ Supporting Disaster Preparedness and Response



# **“Some” Common Goals:**

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- ▶ **Community Voice, Participation & Partnership**
- ▶ **Community Service and Volunteer Programs**
- ▶ **Service Learning**
- ▶ **Assisting small nonprofits and communities to rebuild capacity, post-hurricane, in designated areas**



# VISTA Site Responsibilities

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- ▶ **VISTA projects are approved for up to 3 years (sometimes 4 years)**
- ▶ **Goals and objectives should be to create sustainability, ensuring an infrastructure is in place, and build capacity**
- ▶ **VISTA Members do not perform direct service; they perform indirect service that ensures continuation after the 3 year project**



# **“Some” Common Activities:**

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- ▶ **One-on-one meetings, presentations and workshops with potential community partners**
- ▶ **Develop technology and volunteer management infrastructure**
- ▶ **Development of partner agencies capacity**
- ▶ **Develop fund raising mechanisms**
- ▶ **Check out “Best Practices” at <http://nationalserviceresources.org>**





# Recruitment

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## Applicants can be recruited:

- ◆ Locally
- ◆ Nationally (through the on-line recruitment system)



# Financial Support

## Subsistence Allowance (a.k.a. Living Allowance)

- Approximately 105% of poverty level, adjusted for cost of living in your area.
  - New Orleans-\$865 per month/All Others-\$833 per month



# Financial Support

## ► Relocation Allowance

- ◆ For those who must relocate in order to serve.
- ◆ Amount varies by locale and need but up to \$550

## ► Travel to...

- ◆ ...pre-service orientation.
- ◆ ...project site.
- ◆ ...home of record at end of service, if CNS relocated you at start of service.



# End of Service Options

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## Ed Award (\$4725) or Stipend (\$1200)

- ▶ Members may choose \$4,725 Education Award OR
- ▶ \$1,200 in Stipend - \$100 put in an account each month

The Education Award or Stipend is paid out after the successful completion of their year of service.



# End Of Service Options

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- ▶ When getting the stipend, student loans can be deferred based on “economic hardship”
- ▶ When getting the Education Award, the member can get a forbearance on their student loans





# VISTA

- ▶ **Health Insurance**
- ▶ **Life Insurance (\$2.07 p/pay period)**



# Other Benefits

- ▶ **Income Exclusion from public assistance calculations:**  
VISTA living allowances cannot be used in calculating benefits for public assistance programs if the VISTA member was eligible for and/or receiving benefits PRIOR to joining VISTA.

*Food Stamps/WIC*

*SSI*

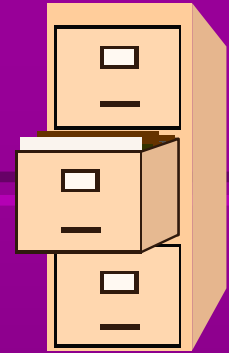
*TANF (replaced AFDC)*

*Assisted Housing*

*Veteran's Benefits*



# Administrative Policies



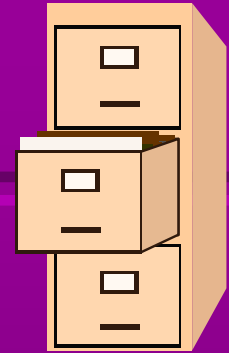
## Term of Service:

- ◆ 12 months, excluding PSO training
- ◆ Can serve up to three terms (in a combination of any CNCS programs)
- ◆ Personal and Medical Leave
  - » 10 work days personal
  - » 10 work days sick per service year.





# Administrative Policies



## ► Educational Courses

- ◆ Full-time enrollment PROHIBITED
- ◆ Part-time enrollment in school is PROHIBITED with these exceptions:
  - » course is directly related to assignment; OR
  - » course is part of career development plan; OR
  - » enrollment (6 hours or less) required for Pell Grant eligibility
- ◆ Enrollment in school requires approval from State Director and project supervisor



# Basic Laws and Policies

- ▶ **AmeriCorps\*VISTAs** are prohibited from providing religious instruction or proselytizing as part of their duties or from serving on projects which do so.
- ▶ **AmeriCorps\*VISTAs** and project sponsors are prohibited from requesting or receiving any compensation for the services of AmeriCorps\*VISTAs.



# Basic Laws and Policies

- ▶ **AmeriCorps\*VISTAs** are prohibited from participating in political campaigns or voter registration drives, providing transportation to the polls, lobbying and pro- or anti-labor organizing, or taking any action with respect to partisan or nonpartisan political activity while on duty or perceived to be on duty as an AmeriCorps member.



# Questions?

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